

MAN'S PLACE
IN THE
UNIVERSE

A SUMMARY OF THEOSOPHIC STUDY

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THE STORY OF ATLANTIS

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PREFACE

THE need for a handbook of Theosophy is expressed by a daily-increasing number of students who wish to obtain some knowledge of its teaching, without necessarily having to read through the volumes in which its more abstruse problems are dealt with at length.

But the scope of the subject being so stupendous, and the employment of some oriental terms being an unfortunate necessity (owing to the want in our language of words capable of conveying the required ideas), it is obvious that the writing of such a handbook is not quite a simple task. For Theosophy is the Divine Wisdom which has

been handed down through the ages, and from it, as from a great root, have sprung all the religions which have enlightened man. In other words, Theosophy is the Science of Life—the knowledge about God, about the Universe, about man and his relative position in the scheme of things. God Himself only knows this Science in its sublime totality. But the vastness of extent and complexity in detail even of the fragments we have been privileged to receive, are a bar to the absolutely simple statement which a handbook is supposed to constitute.

The main outlines of the subject which have been specially brought before Western students may indeed be summed up so shortly that a child might understand them. They may be formulated thus: that the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man are fundamental facts. That the Law of absolute justice is all pervading—that Law which ordains that every thought

think, every word we speak, every action we perform, shall have its inevitable sequence for good or for evil, for happiness or for misery, to ourselves and to others, in ever-widening circles. That this Law has been operative through untold ages, and that our very existence here is in consequence of its action; that our earthly pilgrimage was not begun at birth, and will not be ended at death; that, while desire of life remains, we must inevitably return to incarnation, in order to work out the *effects* of our past thoughts, our past words, and our past actions, while the fresh *causes* we generate at every moment will in their turn produce effects which will have to be worked out through future lives. And, finally, that the great law of sacrifice—that law which has been more or less travestied by every religion in turn—is, when rightly understood, the final explanation of the deepest mysteries of being, and the crown of our most sublime attainment.

These are some of the fundamental ideas which are associated with the name of Theosophy. But when we come to work these out in further detail, and, still more, if any reference has to be made to our past history, and the long process of evolution which has made us what we are, the subject becomes one which cannot easily be grasped by every superficial reader. The problem cannot be formulated in absolutely simple language.

While attempting to put before the public as clear and plain a statement as possible, the main object in the writer's mind will be to collect and summarise the various fragments of the great body of teaching, which any close student may recognise by the evidence obtainable, as having existed during past ages in many parts of the world. The first instalment of this ancient teaching, *in its present form*, was made public about twenty-five years ago; but the added store of knowledge which has since been received

has not only thrown illumination on many previously unintelligible problems; but has vastly extended the whole scope of the teaching.

But while simplicity and lucidity shall be our aim, the most transcendent heights of thought have to be faced at the very first step, for the opening chapter deals with man's relation to God; and though God is the fundamental fact of all existence, the words we are obliged to use in speaking of Him are very apt to seem but metaphysical abstractions to the great majority of men.

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MAN'S PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

INTRODUCTION.

IN the preface it is stated that the teaching summarised in this little volume may be recognised as having existed during past ages in many parts of the world. What is there referred to is the Wisdom-tradition, which the inner and mystical teaching of all religions has handed down in a more or less veiled form—of all religions, that is, whose mystical teaching has been preserved. It is unfortunate that in Christianity it has to a great extent been lost.

But every century that passes is bringing

man nearer to the time when he will be "of age," when it will be both his duty and his privilege to definitely choose his course ; and so great a number are now reaching this stage that the guardians of the Wisdom—those who in the following pages are called the Great Ones and the Masters—have considered for the last quarter of a century that it is now a fit time to give to the world, in more definite form, the Wisdom-tradition which had previously been put forward in a comparatively mystical manner, in order that the great facts of existence may be more definitely realised by those who are now ready to act in accordance with them, and in order that the general progress of the world may thus be hastened. The present work, it is hoped, will briefly summarise the leading features of the many works on Theosophy which have appeared during the last five and twenty years.

While the loftiest and most transcendental of the truths stated in the following pages—

those, for example, about the Great Logoi and the ruling Intelligences of our Universe—are only capable of verification by one who has reached the level of these Great Ones, the power to get into communication with these Great Ones, as well as the power to verify the majority of facts here stated about the supersensual life, are open to the attainment of any earnest student who has reached in his past lives a sufficiently high stage of development, and who now has enough will and perseverance to develop the higher powers and faculties latent in him. For as the mathematical expert or the musical genius must necessarily have brought over from his past life much more than the mere rudiments of the science or art in which diligence in the present life has made him an expert, so will the faculties of the soul which have been adequately trained in past lives similarly endow the individual with knowledge which discipline and training may so further develop that he may become

an "expert" in the Hidden Science, in the study, that is, of the invisible world. The way by which this knowledge and power of investigation may be attained is pointed out in the concluding chapter.

Thus, the facts here stated have been verified all up the line, firstly by those who have given to the writer his information, and who can vouch for the general accuracy of the statements as to reincarnation, that is, the passage of the human soul into the superphysical realms, its experiences during the long interval of its stay there, and its ultimate return to physical existence. Indeed, all the statements made about the higher planes of being, up to and including the first touch of consciousness on the Bud-dhic level, are within their experience and knowledge. But the facts relating to the still higher planes, as well as those dealing with the infinite past and the infinite future in the evolution of the race, are stated on the authority of those Great Ones, with

whom the writer's informants have been and are in direct communication. In no statement is it of course possible entirely to eliminate sources of error. The writer may not have fully apprehended the information given to him, and his informants may in a similar manner have failed to grasp the full bearing of the knowledge placed at their disposal; but with this proviso, the statements contained in the following pages are with confidence offered to those who desire some knowledge of the Theosophic teachings.

Before broaching the main subject of consideration, it may be well to define the sense in which some of the terms are here used. When speaking of Spirit and Matter, for example, it must always be borne in mind that Spirit is Life and Consciousness—the absolute Consciousness which is God, or the rays of consciousness sent forth by Him, which form the individualities of men; while Matter is that other pole of the one universal

Substance, through and by means of which consciousness can alone function. References will hereafter be found to the ladder which joins the lowest realms of matter with the highest realms of spirit; but it must be remembered that the last-named realms are still formed of matter, although in an infinitely etherealised condition. They are spoken of as "spiritual," because when functioning in those realms, consciousness unfolds its activities and displays its powers with a freedom from limitation and all sense of separateness which is the very antithesis, the opposite pole of that condition of limitation and confinement with which we are familiar in the physical world.

The evolution of life and the corresponding evolution of form is another term which requires some comment. It is the very basis of the subject here dealt with. According to the exoteric science of the day, no discrimination is made between the two, the evolution of form being, indeed, con-

sidered as embracing the evolution of life. But the evolution of life is really the evolution of soul, and in this aspect it will in the following pages take precedence of the mere evolution of form, for the latter is but a corollary and consequence of the former. As we shall see, it is for the sake of the evolution of soul that this whole Universe exists, while form is but the necessary means for the education and perfectionment of soul.

The universal Law—the Law of Karma—is repeatedly, though incidentally, referred to in the following pages; but though its special action may in each case be inferred from the context, a few words of general explanation will fitly preface the references to its detailed operation. The Law of Karma, in its broadest sense, is the law of equilibrium, or re-adjustment, of cause and effect. Our whole planetary chain, indeed the whole Solar system, and probably the whole Cosmos, may be considered as within

its sphere of action ; but it is in its bearing on the races of men, and more especially in its bearing on the individual, that we have here to do with it. Every individual is a field of energy on all the planes of existence, while the function of the Law of Karma is to readjust the results ensuing, from desires and thoughts and motives as well as from speech and action on the physical plane. Its operation as bearing on the individual has thus a twofold aspect, internal as regards character, external as regards circumstance and environment. "As a man soweth so shall he also reap," is an aphorism applicable to both cases, partially so even in the life, he is then living, eminently so in the next life he is destined to lead on earth, by which time all the results of his past thoughts and efforts will have been synthesised in the character with which he returns to life. This is a most important point to bear in mind. *It is will and effort which produce faculty.* And as the determined

endeavour of one life is bound to result in greater capacity in the life to come, to reach the goal aimed at, whatever it may be, so is the man's whole character in the present life built by the desires, thoughts, and motives which animated him in the last.

This rule operates with intensified force in the case of those who undertake the study of the great facts of existence here dealt with. For it is impossible to give any real attention to this subject without making a definite choice between what are familiarly called good and evil. The very first step brings the student to the tree of knowledge. "He must pluck and eat; he must choose. No longer is he capable of the indecision of ignorance. He goes on either on the good or on the evil path. And to step definitely and knowingly even but one step on either path produces great Karmic results. The mass of men walk waveringly, uncertain as to the goal they aim at; their,

standard of life is indefinite ; consequently their Karma operates in a confused manner. But when once the threshold of knowledge is reached, the confusion begins to lessen, and, consequently, the Karmic results increase enormously, because all are acting in the same direction on all the different planes ;" for one who embraces this knowledge "cannot be half-hearted, nor can he return when he has passed the threshold. These things are as impossible as that the man should become the child again. The individuality has approached the state of responsibility by reason of growth : it cannot recede from it."¹

But while will and effort produce faculty—determine, that is, the character with which the man shall be born—it is *his previous actions as affecting others which produce the circumstance and environment in which he shall be born*. These are the two fundamental aspects of the Law of

¹ *Light on the Path*, pp. 32, 33.

Karma as bearing on the individual. It may also be added that what has formed the leading characteristic of one life will be the first to work itself out for good or for evil in the life to come.

CHAPTER I.

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD.

THE first and most important subject to be dealt with is Man's relation to God, and this may be heralded with the statement, which every religion in turn has expressed in more or less definite terms, that Man is the 'son of God.' The object of this chapter will be to render in some degree intelligible the nature of this relationship.

We must first attempt some explanation of what is meant by God. The Universe is involved in any consideration of Deity, for it is by and through the exercise of the creative aspect of Deity that the limited mind of Man can best approach this most

sacred and exalted of all subjects; indeed, the very existence of mind and of Man results from that first supreme act of self-devotion which the bringing into existence of the Cosmos constitutes.

Beyond our Solar system it is said that there exist untold myriads of Solar systems. The suns of those systems—the centres of light and of life—are the countless stars which people space. These can be seen from our little earth, but the life-bearing planets which circle round each of these suns are invisible to our eye.

Now, before this whole Cosmos¹ was brought into being, during its evolution, and after it shall have ceased to exist, the Source and Fount of all being was, is, and shall be. Unutterable, unthinkable, inconceivable is this Source and End of all. But emanating in some unfathomable manner from the Unmanifest, the Manifest comes forth. The first emanation, which we may

¹The Cosmos is the totality of all solar systems. •

call by the name of the First Great Logos, must be considered as still abiding in the realm of the Unmanifest. From the First proceeds the Second Logos, in whom duality first finds expression—the duality of Spirit and of Matter, of life and of form. From the Second proceeds the Third Logos—the Universal Mind—the Creator of all that is.

And so the first definition of Man's thought about the Godhead is the statement that It is a Trinity in Unity, and a Unity in Trinity. A Unity, in its unmanifested condition, It becomes under Its creative aspect a Trinity. Nor can the names by which we may name the Nameless find better expression than the Three Great Logoi, for they are the Logoi or Words of creative Wisdom who called into existence the whole manifested Universe—the starry multitude of the heavenly host.

But though the statement of these transcendent facts was the necessary prelude, the limits of our own Solar system will

provide more than ample scope for this summary of Theosophic doctrine. Indeed, our minds may easily lose themselves in awe and reverence before the Rulers of our own little globe, let alone the Rulers of our Planetary Chain; while the still more exalted heights—for they are now heights of Deity—represented by the God and Father of our spirits,—our Solar Logos—are as incapable of comprehension by us in our present stage of evolution as are those of the Absolute and Uttermost Itself.

As we shall discover in the course of this investigation, the great law of correspondence is one of universal application. The first self-limitation of the great First Cause is referred to above as the first supreme act of self-devotion. It is the Great Sacrifice, the putting forth of Itself as the Logos which is Itself, in order that, in the fulness of time, many Individualities should be drawn back to consciously share with It that bliss which is Its very nature and essence.

In the same way, the Logos whose manifestation is our Solar system, and whom we must conceive of as emanating (as do all the Solar Logoi) in some mysterious manner from the Third Great Logos, undertakes the creation of His system as a stupendous act of sacrifice; for the outpourings of the life-breath, which will presently be referred to, are nothing less than the putting forth of Himself in the worlds which He brought into being.

The endurance of limitation in lower conditions which constitutes the Sacrifice, is undertaken, too, for a period of time to us incalculable—the whole duration of the Solar system. And the deeper into matter¹ the life-breath descends, the greater is its imprisonment. This it is which constitutes for our Logos the Crucifixion, the Death, and

¹ Matter must not be thought of as external to Deity. God being the one fundamental reality must necessarily embrace all that exists. This point will be referred to later on.

the Burial.¹ The Sacrifice, too, is made for those who as yet have no existence. "He gives out His life to the unborn—to those who but for His self-devotion would not have individual consciousness at all;"² in order that the whole volume of Divine consciousness may be richer by countless additional centres of immortal consciousness, each one of which has within it the potentiality of rising to the level of its Father and its God.

The first three emanations from the unfathomable Source of all being were spoken of above as a Trinity. So also is our Solar Logos, and corresponding with His three-fold nature are the three great outpourings which take place at the inauguration and during the evolution of our Solar system. Threefold also are the fundamental qualities inherent in every particle composing this manifested Universe.

¹ See W. Williamson's *The Great Law*, pp. 373, 401.

² A. P. Sinnett's "The System to which we belong," Transaction No. 30 of the London Lodge, p. 21.

The first great outpouring, which may be said to have for its object the vitalising of primordial substance, proceeds from the third or lowest principle of the Solar Logos (equivalent to the Third Great Logos, the Universal Mind or the Holy Ghost of our Christian system), and must be considered as containing the triple power of the Deity. It comes forth from the Logos as life-breath in seven great waves or vibrations, and evolves from the primitive matter of the Cosmos all the various forms of matter to be found in our Solar system.

The second outpouring of what may be called ensouling essence, proceeds from the second principle of the Solar Logos (equivalent to the Second or Dual Logos, or God the Son of our Christian system). Coming forth similarly in seven great waves, its action causes the origin of life and of form, for it gives to matter (which is, as it were, the other pole of the Absolute) the capacity of evolving form, while its further

object is the calling into existence of the seven kingdoms of nature, the ensouling and gradual developing of consciousness in each.

The third great outpouring is the endowment of the divine spark, which constitutes in man that ultimate centre of consciousness which is his immortal individuality. This third outpouring proceeds from the first aspect of the Solar Logos (equivalent to the First Great Logos, or God the Father of our Christian system).

And thus is man in a very special manner the thrice born son of God, for he has been directly endowed with a portion of His very essence. The sonship which he shares with animals, plants, and, indeed, with all creation, will obviously have been inferred from the statements made about the first two great outpourings, for it must be realised that every atom of which our bodies are composed is instinct with the divine life.

CHAPTER II.

THE PLANETARY CHAINS.¹

HAVING now offered some intelligible explanation of the more or less vague statements made by the various religions as to man's relation to God, we must now pursue the investigation with regard to man's place in the Universe.

A general survey of the whole Solar system, and of the schemes of evolving life of which it is the field, will fitly preface the consideration of our own history during the present planetary chain, and on the

¹ For more detailed treatment of the system to which we belong, see A. P. Sinnett's *The Growth of the Soul*, pp. 256-292.

previous planetary chains which have been our dwelling places through the past ages.

The mode in which what is usually called "creation" takes place, has been roughly summarised in the previous chapter. It consists, as we have seen, of the outpourings of divine essence by our Solar Logos in the worlds which He brought into being.

Now the scheme of evolution to which we belong is only one out of the seven which are concerned with physical manifestation in the Solar system.

Each of the seven schemes of evolution which, taken together, form the Solar system, is under the guidance of a Divine Being whom we may call the Logos of the scheme, for He watches over its evolutionary process throughout the whole period during which the life-wave circles round the seven successive chains of worlds, whose birth, life, and death constitute a single scheme of evolution.

The life-limit of our Solar system is known by the name of a Maha-Manwantara—a still more stupendous period, for our Sun, which witnessed the birth of its first, will still be in existence at the end of its seventh scheme of evolution.

Thus seven successive planetary Manwantaras constitute the life of one scheme of evolution. Each one of these embraces the seven times repeated sweep of the life-wave round the chain of the seven globes, and each one of these is presided over by One of the great Hierarchy who stands below the Logos of the scheme.

Seven rounds of the chain of globes constitute the Manwantara or existence of a chain, and each of these rounds is similarly presided over by One of the great Hierarchy next in degree.

Seven world-periods following each other on as many globes in succession, and each similarly under the guidance of a Divine ruler, constitute one round of the planets.

Seven root-race periods, each presided over by one of less degree (but so great that the ordinary human mind can scarcely reach the conception of his greatness), make up one world-period, *i.e.*, the period during which the evolving life-wave "inhabits a single planet or globe.

Seven, it will be observed, is the root-number of all that concerns physical manifestation, not only in our own chain, but throughout the whole Solar system; and, as we shall see, the time spent on the physical plane is quite infinitesimal compared with the ages passed on globes formed of finer grades of matter.

Each planetary Manwantara or period of activity, it must be stated, is followed by a corresponding period of rest known as Pralaya, during which the various kingdoms of Nature pass into a subjective condition of relative inactivity; while the chain of worlds of the old Manwantara is disintegrated, and a new chain of worlds prepared

for the advent of the life-wave in the next Manwantara. Or it may be more correct to regard each new chain of worlds as the reincarnation of the previous chain, for there is a transference of the life-principle to each planet from the corresponding planet of the previous chain. .

Each Manwantara must be recognised as having for its object the raising in the scale of being of the evolving life ; in other words, the evolution of soul. Thus the undifferentiated monadic essence originally breathed out by our Solar Logos, through and by the countless experiences it has to undergo, gradually achieves differentiation, and gradually develops self - consciousness. Slowly, and through the infinite ages, that which was the mineral becomes the plant, that which was the plant passes into the animal kingdom, that which was the animal passes into the human kingdom, while the man is destined to become the god.

Names may now be given to the seven

chains of worlds which at present constitute the fields of activity for the seven schemes of evolution above referred to; the planet visible to physical eyesight being naturally the one chosen to give its name to the chain.

These are—

The Neptune Chain with 3 physical globes.

„ Uranus	„	1	„	globe.
„ Saturn	„	1	„	„
„ Jupiter	„	1	„	„
„ Earth	„	3	„	globes.
„ Venus	„	1	„	globe.
„ Vulcan	„	1	„	„

It must be remembered that none of these chains of worlds were in existence at the beginning of the Solar system, and long before its close they will all have ceased to exist, for the single Manwantara is the life-period of each of these chains; while our Sun, as we have seen, will witness the many times repeated disintegration of

all the chains during their planetary Pralaya, and the corresponding rebuilding for the new Manwantara, before its glorious life approaches its end.

Naturally the schemes of evolving life, inhabiting these chains of worlds, stand at very different stages of development.

The interesting fact about the Neptune chain is that it is the only other chain besides our own in the Solar system which has three planets on the physical plane. Two of these planets, indeed, lie so far beyond Neptune that they have not yet been discovered by astronomers, and the outer one of the two is not likely to be discovered, moving, as it does, in an orbit removed by over 10,000 million miles from the Sun.

The life-scheme of the Neptune chain will not, it is said, attain any very high level. The light and heat received from the Sun by the planet Neptune itself being so infinitesimal compared with that which

we receive, might induce us to regard its climatic conditions as the cause; but we cannot draw any deduction as to the unsuitability of other globes for the development of life from the fact of their differing greatly in climatic conditions from our own.

The fate in store for the Uranus scheme gives the lie to any such inference, for the Sun can hardly seem a much larger object viewed from Uranus than Jupiter appears to us; nevertheless, we are given to understand that the Uranus scheme is concerned with the evolution of a lofty order of beings.

The Saturnian scheme is at a very early stage in its development, the planet Saturn itself not being yet fit to act as a home for physical life.

The Jupiter scheme is more advanced, though not so far advanced as we are. Its humanity, or, it may be more correct to say, its highest kingdom which is destined to become humanity, is now in the second

round of its third Manwantara, and is destined to attain a very high level. The planet Jupiter itself has, like Saturn, not cooled sufficiently to render it a fit habitation for physical life, from which it is apparent that life on this chain does not yet function in physical bodies.

Our own scheme of evolution at present inhabiting this earth will be referred to presently.

The Venus scheme, it is said, has attained a high stage of development. It is far in advance of all the rest. Having already reached the seventh round of its planets in its fifth Manwantara, there is no wonder that its humanity stand at a relatively god-like level compared with us.

Vulcan is the planet lying nearest to the sun. Although astronomers suspect its existence, and have given it its name in advance, it has not yet been clearly identified by the telescope. The order of life on this chain of worlds will not, it is said, attain

the heights destined for our own and for the Venus chain.

Having rapidly summarised the leading features, so far as they are known to us, of our fellow schemes of evolution, we must now turn to our own chain of worlds. The other two planets belonging to it, which are visible to the physical eye, are Mars and Mercury—Mars being the planet last occupied by humanity, and Mercury being in process of preparation for our advent. The planet which was inhabited before Mars, and the one which will be our home when the life-wave has left Mercury, are both formed of so much finer a state of matter than this earth, that they are invisible to ordinary eyesight; while the planet on which our evolutionary process in this Manwantara began, and the one on which it will complete its pilgrimage, are formed of matter of a still finer grade.

Now, we have reached the fourth Manwantara of our series. The last one is

known by the name of the Lunar Manwantara, from the fact of our present moon having formed one of that chain. It was what our earth now is, the fourth planet of the chain—the one on which physical life touches its most material point. And just as our earth is the home of the evolving life at its nadir of materiality in each round, so is this present chain the fourth and most material of the seven chains of planets which in sequence provide homes for the evolving life throughout the stupendous scope of the seven Manwantaras which form the life-limit of our scheme of evolution.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOWNWARD AND THE UPWARD ARCS.

THE object of all existence having been recognised as the evolution of soul, and the vast field on which this stupendous work is being carried on having been indicated in the last chapter, the process adopted by Nature to attain this end must now be enquired into.

The process involves a descent and an ascent—a descent of spirit into matter—in other words, the taking on by spirit of ever-increasing limitation; and an ascent of spirit to God—in other words, the casting off by spirit of the limitations which it had assumed, while retaining the individuality

which those limitations had aided it to gain. The turning point of the arc of evolution is necessarily always that of the most dense materiality, or closest imprisonment in limitation.

With regard to what we call spirit and what we call matter, it must be borne in mind that while the Cosmos is in manifestation, the two are indissolubly bound together, for spirit and matter are but the poles of the one universal substance. Nevertheless, the gradations between these two poles may be regarded as infinite in number.

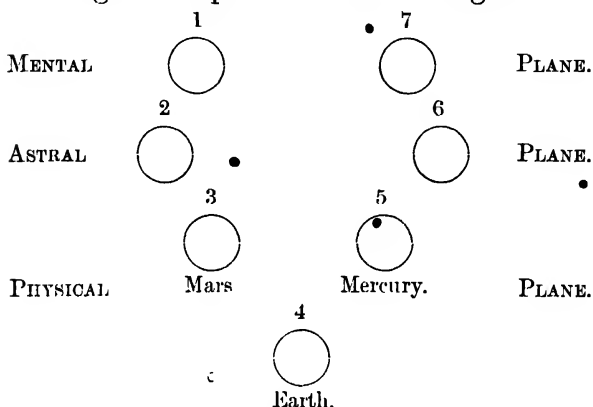
Now we must consider the whole seven Manwantaras⁴ or term of existence of a scheme of evolution as constituting a single circle, the downward arc of which consists of the course of evolution during the first half of this stupendous period, while the second half corresponds with the ascent of the upward arc. The fact of the fourth chain of worlds constituting the nadir of

this circle receives illustration from what has been already said about the other schemes in our Solar system. The Jupiter scheme, which we have seen to be in its *third* Manwantara, and the Venus scheme, which is in its *fifth* Manwantara, have both but a single planet on the physical plane. The one is on the downward arc of its scheme of existence, the other on the upward arc; while our scheme, which is in its *fourth* Manwantara, in other words, at the nadir of its scheme of evolution, has three planets on the physical plane. The fact of the Neptune scheme also having three planets on the physical plane may naturally cause us to infer that this scheme is also in its *fourth* Manwantara. The information, too, received about our third or Lunar Manwantara, when our scheme had but a single planet on the physical plane—the planet, namely, which endures to-day as our moon—all harmonises with and elucidates the above views.

Each Manwantara, too, must be regarded as illustrative of the cyclic process, for each is the scene of the descent of the life-wave from realms spiritual into realms material, and of its ascent from the material to the spiritual again. During the first half of the cyclic process which we have called by the name of the downward arc, the monadic essence poured forth by the Logos encases itself during its descent in envelopes of increasing density to correspond with its surroundings; while the process is reversed on the upward arc, and the denser envelopes of matter are one by one discarded. The middle and turning point of the Manwantara is naturally represented by the fourth round of the planets.

So, too, with each round of the planets. We have seen at the end of the last chapter that the globe on which our evolutionary process began—say globe No. 1—and the one on which it will complete its pilgrimage—say globe No. 7—are both formed of

matter of a very fine grade. Let us call it matter of the mental plane. When the infinite ages of experience have been gathered



on globe No. 1, the life-wave passes to globe No. 2. Though formed of matter so fine that it is invisible to physical eyes (let us call it matter of the Astral plane), it is nevertheless much grosser than the matter composing globe No. 1. The descent from the Astral to the physical is the next step of the downward arc, while this planet—our Earth—which is the fourth of the series, represents the middle and turning point.

So, too, with this present World-period—the period, that is, during which the life-wave occupies the earth at its fourth round of the planets—the downward arc consists of the period during which the first, second, and third root-races were running their course, the middle point of the fourth root-race constituting the nadir and turning point. It is interesting to note that, belonging, as we do, to the fifth race, we individually must have passed the point where spirit is dominated to the greatest extent by the limitations of matter; but it must also be noted that the great majority of the inhabitants of the earth to-day belong not to the fifth but to the fourth race.

When, however, we come to deal with a race, the rule of the downward and upward arcs no longer holds good, for the process is reversed. The history of a race represents not only the descent of spirit in order that it may ultimately ascend more richly endowed, but the ascent of “form” which, when it has

reached its highest point of development, is inevitably destined to deteriorate and decline until it reaches final extinction. Compared with the law of descent and ascent, this may be called the minor cycle, while the two together represent the idea intended to be symbolised by the interlaced triangles.

This consideration of the life-history of a race also supplies what may be called a philosophical justification of the doctrine of rebirth. It is obvious that, until its zenith is reached, every race is "the field for the gradual improvement of type, and thus are provided the fitting forms for the gradually improving individuals who constitute the race."¹ But when the zenith is passed, degeneration of the forms sets in. The race may have taken thousands or hundreds of thousands of years to reach its zenith; and similar periods may elapse during its decadence, but its final extinction is only a matter of time. During its down-

¹ W. Williamson's *The Great Law*, p. 225.

ward, career the forms it provides for the individuals who use them as their dwellings are of a lower and lower type. For a long time these continue satisfactorily to supply fitting vehicles for those advancing from still lower conditions. But when the type becomes so degraded that tenants are no longer forthcoming to fill the forms, sterility inevitably sets in, and the race ceases to be. "There are, for example, instances of aboriginal tribes in Australia and New Zealand who have, even in our own time, become extinct. These were recognised as among the lowest types of humanity on earth. The inference from this is obvious. The general progress achieved had reached a stage where forms of a superior type were required to express the growing human attributes of even the lowest savages then ready to return to incarnation." When a racial type ceases to be of value as a habitat for any soul, naturally it is destined to extinction. As the Universe itself only exists for the sake of soul, so do

all stages in the Universe exist only for its sake.

But while the race, as we have seen, follows the course of the minor cycle, the individual—the unit whose numbers constitute the race—follows the course of the major cycle. Naturally so, for he is spirit—the spark from the Logos. He follows the downward and the upward sweep of the whole Manwantaric cycle, and the races on the planets through which he passes merely provide him with temporary dwellings.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KARMA OF FAILURE.

A MORE detailed account of the cyclic process must now be attempted, and some explanation offered of the varying rates of progress of the entities composing the life-wave.

To recapitulate again the stages of the process with which all manifestation is concerned. Slowly and through the infinite ages, the monadic essence, following the course of the major cycle through the downward arc of its three elemental kingdoms,¹

¹ The three elemental kingdoms are those prior to the mineral kingdom. They thus make up the seven kingdoms of Nature, through which the life-wave courses.

reaches eventually the fourth and lowest kingdom, which is the mineral. It is the turning point. Slowly and through the infinite ages of the upward arc, that which was the mineral becomes the plant, that which was the plant passes into the animal kingdom, that which was the animal passes into the human kingdom.

This process of evolution through the lower kingdoms must be considered by us as carried on without full consciousness or volition on the part of the entities concerned, although a wider scientific knowledge may possibly some day reveal that there is choice and volition in the lower kingdoms corresponding with their states of consciousness, for we are told that there is something which corresponds with consciousness even in the mineral. Still, from our present point of view, we may regard the process as almost automatic until the threshold of the human kingdom is approached.

Now this threshold was only approached

in the last or Lunar Manwantara—the third of our series. The first two Manwantaras were apparently concerned with the evolution of the lower kingdoms up to the animal kingdom. As the object of each Manwantara is the raising in the scale of being of the evolving life, it must be obvious that each Manwantara has its allotted task; in other words, that at the end of each a certain standard is expected to be reached. Now the standard placed before the highest of the kingdoms—that which was destined to become humanity—in the Lunar Manwantara, was the attainment of complete individuality. It was only a small minority, however, who attained this goal, and who proved themselves worthy of being endowed with the divine spark. A second group, while barely touching Mânas or mind, succeeded, nevertheless, in developing an amount of self-consciousness which may be defined as the knowledge that “I am I.” The third group failed even to reach that level, having

only developed the germ of such self-consciousness. Now these three great hosts are known by the name of the Lunar Pitris—the Lunar ancestors, that is, of mankind in this Manwantara. These three great hosts of Pitris we shall call Groups I., II., and III. Deeply significant of Nature's ways is the life-history of these three groups, when, after the long planetary Pralaya, our present Manwantara began its course.

At the dawn of the earth chain with its seven globes awaiting habitation, and before the first flutter of life began, the archetypes of all the future types had already been prepared in the divine mind of the Planetary Spirit who for our chain acts as ruler and guide of the evolving life-wave. The plan thus prepared is carried out through the ages by the Intelligences who act under the guidance of the Planetary Spirit.¹

The life-impulse now arrives on the first,

¹ *The Lunar Pitris.* Transaction No. 26 of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society.

globe of our chain, that one which, along with the seventh, has been described as composed of matter of the mental plane. But instead of the monadic essence (which even at the end of the Lunar Manwantara remained undifferentiated) appearing, as might have been expected, in the lowest elemental kingdom, it is the Pitris of group III. who are set to prepare the forms in this lowest kingdom. When this is done they pass to the second elemental kingdom, leaving their forms to be filled by the undifferentiated animal monadic essence then passing over from the Lunar chain. For it must be borne in mind that, speaking generally, individuality does not exist below the human kingdom, although it is true we are now beginning to effect differentiation among some of our pet domestic animals; in other words, and to put it crudely, beginning to develop in them souls fit for individual rebirth in human form.

The Pitris of group III. thus run through

the three elemental kingdoms on the first globe, then the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms, re-attaining the human kingdom at the end of their stay there.

On the second globe, composed, as we have seen, of matter belonging to the astral plane, they pass on *again* as the lowest elemental kingdom, and work upwards as before to the human level. This process continues on each globe. They pass *on each* through all the kingdoms, always retaining the "I am I" consciousness, and followed always through each kingdom up to the human level by the monadic hosts behind them. It will at once be seen that, as this third group only attain the human kingdom just before quitting each globe, those monadic hosts following them have not time, so to speak, to reach that level, and it is only at the dawn of the second round that the monads next in order (the unindividualised animal monadic essence of the Lunar chain) attain the human kingdom.

“After the first round the Pitris of group III. manifest no more through the lower kingdoms. They retain their humanity during the remainder of the Manwantara. Nor must their cycling through the lower kingdoms, during the first round, be regarded as a [very serious] retrogression, since the earth chain, even in its lower stages, is in advance of the Lunar chain.” But their consciousness of identity, though not very vivid, was vivid enough to make them at least dimly feel their limitation when evolving through the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. This was indeed part of their Karma for having failed to take advantage of the opportunities afforded them during the Lunar Manwantara.¹

When the development of the individuals composing the third group was brought more

¹ The statement made on this subject on page 9 of the *Lunar Pitris* is not quite correct. The above is from information received subsequently to the writing of that Transaction.

in line with that of the second group, who had already fully attained the "I am I" consciousness, the least progressed individuals of the second group began to join the stream (each group, it should be stated, had seven sub-divisions, so that the lowest division of one group was not very far removed from the highest division of the group below it). This occurred at the dawn of the second round. Up to this time the second group of Pitris had been resting in a subjective condition. They continued to drop in throughout the second round, which thus embraces in its human kingdom the second and third groups of the Pitris, and "that portion of the monadic hosts behind them which was ready to emerge from the animal kingdom by the end of the first round."

All through the third round and up to the middle of the fourth round this state of things continued, subject, of course, to such transfers from any lower kingdom to the

one above it as were necessary. But it was not until the life-wave had reached this earth at the middle of the fourth round, and during the Lemurian or third race-period, that the first group of the Pitris began to return to incarnation. Having attained complete individuality, and having received the divine spark on the previous chain of worlds, they had spent these intervening ages in the bliss of some subjective state corresponding to their stage of advance. But now that the life-wave of evolution was approaching the level they had reached, it was time for them again to join the stream. All through the fifth, sixth, and seventh sub-races of the third root-race did they continue to incarnate, while the most advanced among them did not take birth till the early sub-races of the Atlantean period.

It was during this great epoch, extending from the middle of the third race-period to well on in the fourth, that occurred an

event pregnant with consequences of the greatest moment to mankind. An event mysterious as well as important, for it was nothing less than the taking birth among humanity of beings far in advance of humanity, some of them beings from the advanced and lofty scheme of evolution of which Venus is the visible planet. These are known in some writings as "Sons of Wisdom" and "Lords of the Flame," and the object of their coming was to help and stimulate the evolution of the laggards of humanity, i.e., the two lower groups of the Lunar Pitris. Under their guidance and influence, these latter rapidly advanced in mental growth, so that faint vibrations began to be set up in the higher mental sheath, and it was made ready for that third outpouring of the Divine Life which then took place, transforming the higher mental sheath into a vehicle capable of carrying over the human characteristics from life to life, and endowing all men

with individual immortality. As a natural consequence the door was then shut, for the time being, upon the entities thronging in from the animal kingdom.

To turn now to the infinitely far-off future from the infinitely far-off past, a most instructive lesson may be learned from the above sketch of Nature's mode of inaugurating a new Manwantara, for an interesting parallel is furnished between the fate in store for ourselves in the far-off future and the fate of the three great hosts of the Lunar Pitris.

Manifestly the standard by which we shall be judged will be a very much higher one, to correspond with the advance achieved by humanity in this Manwantara.

Like the Pitris of group III., those who fail altogether, during the present Manwantara, to take advantage of their opportunities, will be set to prepare the forms for the human kingdom at the very beginning of the next Manwantara. When true

humanity has once been reached, it is impossible to return to any lower form of life. Nevertheless, we are given to understand that, owing to the vastly increased capacity of man's nature during the present Manwantara, the limitation which will then have to be endured will be far more terrible than was the imprisonment in mineral or vegetable forms to beings so much lower in the scale of evolution as were the members of the third group of the Lunar Pitris.

The second host of Pitris will find their parallel in many groups which lie between the above-named failures and those who succeed in reaching the highest standard. These groups will, like the second and first hosts of Pitris, join the stream, some at the beginning of the second round of the next Manwantara—that is, when the roughest work of preparing the forms has already been done, some during the third round,

and some even so late as the beginning of the fourth round.

Remembering that the first group of Pitris did not return to incarnation till the fourth round of our present Manwantara, it might apparently have been inferred from the above that those who reach that degree of perfection which constitutes the normal goal of evolution for this Manwantara, would have to join the stream at some later period. But this is not so, for they will not be required to return to incarnation at all. They will, instead, have various paths of high spiritual evolution awaiting their choice.

What, then, will be the standard of attainment required of us? That is the important question. It will not, we are assured, be one of intellectual development only. The culture of the intellect certainly forms part of the process by which we may reach the required level, and those who fail to take advantage of their opportunities

in this respect will have to pay the price of partial failure and retardation. But Nature is infinitely forbearing, and does not exact the same achievement from those who belonged to the animal kingdom in the Lunar Manwantara, as from those who came over as members of even the third group of the Pitris, still less of the second and first groups. With such vast inequality at the start, the results of failure must needs be widely different.

So far from intellect, however, being the test, we are informed that many groups of the failures may be recruited from among the most intellectual. These individuals may have reached surprising heights of mental culture, and many may be drawn from the most highly educated classes of to-day. But selfishness and the inability to learn the most rudimentary lessons of love and compassion will be their sin, the Karma of which will dog their footsteps right through the interplanetary Pralaya

(which will be to them a colourless period of comparatively dreamless sleep) into the next Manwantara, when they will have to take up their Karmic task, realising, however, throughout, in all its intensity, the isolation and limitation of their position.

The subject can scarcely be closed without some reference to the possibility of failure of an even more terrible character, for now that man has developed the capacities of mind and of will—has “come of age,” so to speak—he has the power to choose between working in concert with the divine law of compassion, and working for purely selfish ends, or, to state it crudely, the power to choose between good and evil. And if he persistently chooses the evil, and continues through innumerable lives to choose the evil, in spite of the innumerable opportunities offered by Nature for calling a halt, he *may* make absolute wreckage of himself. It is needless to speak of such a fate. That which persistently and irretriev-

ably runs counter to the divine Law of the Universe is cast out as wreckage, to be worked up again in some far-off future, when all missed possibilities shall be realised.

CHAPTER V.

VEHICLES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND REINCAR- NATION.¹

IN the previous chapters the history of mankind has been traced in rough outline, though chiefly in its connection with the whole scheme of evolving life. But the individual must now be dealt with, for it is the persistent individuality of the entities composing the human kingdom that con-

¹ The terms employed in this little treatise, "sheaths," "vehicles of consciousness," and "bodies," have been adopted to express, in the most intelligible manner, a definite sequence in the stages of development; but this in no way conflicts with the somewhat different use of the same terms by other writers on Theosophy, for the ideas intended to be expressed are identical.

stitutes one of the great differences between it and the animal kingdom. A further illustration of this difference will be afforded by the consideration of the mode in which Nature arranges for the passage of these entities from life to life.

At death, the soul of the man passes into the subjective realms, exists there through longer or shorter periods of time, always possessed of its individual consciousness, and, when its hour of rebirth arrives, is again provided with a new physical body, which it inhabits during the ensuing earth-life. But this is not so in the animal kingdom. The animal has indeed, like the man, a spark of the divine spirit (this is in addition to the divine life which, as already mentioned, animates every atom of matter in the Universe); but in the case of the animal the dull mental sheath has not yet been made an active vehicle of consciousness. The consequence is that, at the death of the animal, the spark of monadic essence which

animated its body returns to the great store-house of monadic essence which supplies the soul-principle to the whole animal kingdom ; or, it may be more correct to say, returns to the special stream of monadic essence which supplies the soul-principle to that particular genus or species to which the animal in question belonged.

But with the awakening of consciousness in the mental sheaths, as we have seen, man is evolved and individual continuity is established.

The question which now faces us is—
What is it that reincarnates ?

We must here distinguish between the real man, the thinker, and the bodies or vehicles in which he functions. We have seen that in the Solar system there are many planes, the mental plane being the highest which has so far been mentioned. But above the mental plane there is the plane of Buddhi or Soul, and above that again there is the plane of Atma or Spirit.

Now the consciousness—the real man—is a trinity corresponding with the triple essence outbreathed by the Logos. This trinity may be expressed by the term Atma-Buddhi-Mânas, or to put it in English garb, Spirit, Soul, and Mind. And this it is which constitutes the reincarnating entity.

In order that Spirit may function in a physical body, it requires a sheath composed of matter of each of the planes which in descending degree separate the spiritual from the physical. Thus Atma finds its first veil in matter of the Buddhic plane. Atma-Buddhi is then ensheathed in matter of the Mânasic plane. But this plane has two very marked divisions, the higher of which is composed of the three upper sub-planes called “arupa” or formless, from the fact that thought does not in this region assume the definite “form” it does upon the four lower sub-planes, which consequently are known by the name of “rupa” or manifesting

form. It should be stated here that all the planes have seven sub-divisions, each being formed of matter of increasing degrees of density as we pass from the spiritual to the material.

It is, of course, an unavoidable difficulty that the use of the term "matter" in reference to these high planes should carry with it a suggestion of inertness and rigidity. The living vibrating substance which constitutes these planes is almost inconceivably different from the comparatively dense, inert, irresponsive matter with which we are familiar on the physical plane, so that the use of the same word with reference to both is apt to be misleading, although, philosophically speaking, the difference is one of degree and not of kind.

Atma-Buddhi is now ensheathed in matter of the "arupa" level of the mental plane; and this trinity, as we have seen, is what constitutes the basis of the future reincarnating entity, the spirit, soul, and mind

vestures which will become the true Ego of man.

But the descent to the physical plane must be continued. The next sheath is composed of matter of the rupa level of the mental plane, and the whole is then en-sheathed in matter of the astral plane.

On approaching the physical we find that, like the mental, it has two sub-divisions, thus necessitating two sheaths. The higher of these divisions is composed of four grades of ether, and of these is formed the etheric double of the dense body; while the lower sub-division, as is well known, consists of the gases, liquids, and solids, of which are built up material forms, whether in the mineral, vegetable, animal, or human kingdom, and which thus completes the seven grades of matter of the physical plane.

It should now be realised that as nothing in the whole universe is immaterial, there is thus a ladder, from which no rung is

absent, extending from the most densely material level to the loftiest realms of spirit.

Now during the downward arc of evolution, these sheaths remained relatively inert, but the vibrations set up in them during the upward arc, by the repeated experiences of the evolving entities, began to transform them, one after another, into vehicles of consciousness.

It was in the mineral kingdom that this transformation began in the physical and etheric sheaths, and although it is of course difficult to imagine consciousness of any sort in this kingdom, it is nevertheless a logical and philosophical necessity, while the elective chemical affinity or antipathy, as the case may be, which so many of the elements display, should at least enable us to understand its action.

On reaching the vegetable kingdom, we find impacts from without, beginning to convey to the slowly organising astral matter vibrations strong enough to give

rise to some faint sensation in the astral or Kamic¹ sheath. This sense of well-being or discomfort is known by the name of "massive" sensation, while the sensitive plant, amongst others, gives an instance of something more approaching to acute sensation.

In the animal kingdom, movement from place to place, along with varying conditions, produces far more frequent, more diverse, and more powerful impacts from without. The Kamic sheath begins to vibrate more and more actively under different experiences of pain and pleasure. These vibrations, constantly repeated, produce instinct, habit, and emotion. The animal slowly begins to compare its experiences, in the light of their painful or pleasurable quality, as things to be sought for or avoided. The more evolved animals will no longer wait to satisfy hunger till they are already ravenous. They seek

¹ Kama = desire, and thus the Kamic sheath is that whose vibrations appear in consciousness as desire, feeling, and emotion.

their food *before* that moment. This implies the ability to be stimulated by a mental image, however rudimentary the operation may be, for the picture of the anticipated pain of the body through want of food, combined with the picture of the food which could change that pain into pleasure, cannot be called anything else than a mental image.

This really implies a *change of consciousness*, the change in fact which differentiates the animal from the human kingdom. And this change marks the point where, the animal form no longer expressing the consciousness of the entity, the human form is assumed.

• So slight is the vibration set up in the lower mental sheath that it still requires long - repeated experiences. Pain and pleasure are still the teachers; the linking of these in the memory with the objects which respectively produced them, and the beginning to reason about them, ultimately

produce the conviction that the world must be governed by law, and that by obedience to this law pain is avoided and pleasure gained. During innumerable lifetimes memory, judgment, reason, and will are slowly developed, and the lower mental sheath gradually becomes a fairly complete vehicle of consciousness.

• This beginning of reason, the origin of which may frequently lie in the feeling of love and reverence for some being recognised as greater in intelligence and power, is the cause which first produces some faint vibration in the higher mental sheath. As we have seen in the last chapter, the period of quickening this sheath was, in the case of the two lower groups of the Lunar Pitris, hastened from without by the Sons of Wisdom, the Lords of the Flame; while to-day the same process is taking place among some of the domesticated animals, whose evolution is being similarly hastened by civilised man.

The quickening of this sheath, too, constituted a greater advance than did the development of any of the lower sheaths, for, as we have seen, it was the foreshadowing of the third great outpouring, when all men received individual immortality; and although in the case of comparatively few men has this sheath even yet been fully developed into a vehicle of consciousness, it may thenceforward properly be spoken of as the "Causal body," for it then became, as the name implies, the vehicle in which are enfolded at death all the characteristics which constitute the man, and in which the individual passes from life to life.

In order to avoid a possible misunderstanding, it should here be mentioned that the Mânas, forming part of the trinity Atma-Buddhi-Mânas — the immortal individuality—is composed of matter of the *highest* sub-plane of the arupa level, while the causal body is formed of matter of the *lowest* or third sub-plane of the arupa level;

and the process by which the causal body will be rendered fit for the ego to function in with full consciousness consists in the adding to it the matter of the *intermediate* or second sub-plane, thus bridging the gulf.

But all these vehicles still await further development, and part of man's progress consists in transforming them into bodies in which he can consciously function when out of the physical body. The consideration of this process will presently be taken up.

It is indeed this transformation of the physical, the astral, and the mental vehicles, into fully effective and functional bodies upon their respective planes, which constitutes the task with which the upward arc of evolution is concerned in the normal course of development. The functional development, the ordering and organising of each, has to be completed, then the ego has to master each in turn, and obtain full control over it; he next must learn that

each is *not* himself, but merely a body, for his use on its own appropriate plane; and for the realisation of this he must acquire the power of separating himself at will from each, the power of assuming or laying each aside at his own will; and, finally, he must unify completely the consciousness of all these planes, so that he can manifest and use the powers of the higher planes when using the body belonging to the lower one, and bring all his knowledge, power, and experience to bear in whatever body he may at the time be functioning.

It will readily be seen how important a part in this development must be played by the non-physical globes of our chain, in the case of the majority of the human race; and although this is not the place to enter into details upon the subject, the reader will readily be able to follow out the line of thought suggested, and recognise, in one of its aspects at least, the place and function of the other globes in our scheme of evolution.

If he will bear in mind the general rule that on the downward arc, whether in our septenary cycle as a whole, or in the successive passages through the first three globes of our chain in each great round, the processes of evolution are concerned mainly with the building of the vehicles; while on the upward arc, whether of the major cycle or of the respective rounds, these processes are concerned with the transformation of the vehicles so built into fully organised and functional bodies, the details will not be very difficult to follow when in due time the student is ready to study them. .

Before going further, let us pause for a moment and briefly consider these "vehicles of consciousness" in the case of widely differing degrees of human development, for humanity cannot be treated *en bloc*, and the consciousness of the savage and the sage must be something very different. Let us take three instances: first the primitive man—the savage; then a man who

has emerged a long way from barbarism, though he is still but imperfectly developed (this will include a very large class, in fact the bulk of humanity); and, finally, the man of culture and lofty intelligence.

In the primitive man so filmy and undeveloped is the ego which stands behind the personality manifesting here, in other words, so small and *young* is his soul, that its consciousness, such as it is, seems entirely centred in the physical body, its whole force being expressed in the dim and narrow physical plane existence; the astral is still but a very limited vehicle of consciousness for the ego in waking life, and when the physical body sleeps the astral is entirely unable to function.

The consciousness of a man who stands higher in the scale of evolution may still, to a great extent, be fixed on the physical plane, but his emotional nature will have developed, so that the consciousness will be largely centred in his Kâmic or astral

vehicle; and although this astral vehicle, when separated from the physical body during sleep, is still dull and inert, it is gradually being organised for its future destiny as a body in which to function freely. The intelligence of the man will have so far progressed also that the mental vehicle, constantly becoming more active, will answer with increasing capacity to every impetus from within and without. Through repeated experiences, too, the true "man," the ego, will have "increased in wisdom and stature," and by degrees will cease to be fully expressed by its lower vehicles. So far and no further has the bulk of humanity progressed.

But when we come to the man of culture and intellect, whose astral and lower mental vehicles are fully built, the case is entirely different. His consciousness is chiefly centred in the mental body, while his causal body, either through lofty and spiritual aspiration, or by sheer force of abstract

thought, is rapidly becoming an organised vehicle in which the Self—the soul within—may function ; and we find, too, that this true Self has grown so great that only a fraction of its radiance, its accumulated store of experiences and knowledge, can shine through to this earth plane. In some cases of high development the ego may gradually attain permanent recollection, on its own plane, of its past when it inhabited other bodies, though it is but rarely that the physical brain is sufficiently responsive to admit of this recollection filtering through to the waking consciousness.

We thus have three marked types—the savage whose ego is *fully* expressed in the physical life, the commonplace man whose ego is *partly* expressed in the physical, and the Sage whose ego-consciousness is *not* expressed, but rather limited by the physical life.

We need not here stop to consider the still higher parts of man's nature, *i.e.*, the Buddhic

and Atmic vestures of the One Life. We shall refer to them later on when dealing with the destinies of the man who has begun to climb the steep and rugged Path of Initiation.

Now that we have considered how consciousness works in its several vehicles during life, we must regard the condition of these vehicles and their relative persistence after death. The physical body, as we know, begins to disintegrate very soon after the departure of the indwelling spirit, while Prana, the life-essence, the vital energy, finds in the destruction of the body a new field for activity. The etheric double lasts but little longer than the dense body, from which it is seldom far removed, and it too is speedily resolved into its constituent elements.

The astral body¹ lasts for a considerably

¹ It may here be noted that after death the astral vehicle, even of undeveloped mankind, is altered and becomes a true "body," in which the consciousness

longer time. As we shall see in the next chapter, the whole personality passes at death into "Kama Loca," i.e., the realm of desire, where its length of stay will correspond to its stage of development. This stay will naturally be brief for the more spiritually minded, longer for those whose attractions are still towards the gratification of the desire nature, and who cling to the remembrance of the satisfaction of these desires and passions in physical existence; but in *most* cases, whether the sojourn in Kama Loca be long or short, the astral vehicle should have already begun to disintegrate by the time when—the attractions of the desire-plane no longer holding it—the entity is ready to pass on into Devachan, that realm which finds its nearest, though still

can function on the Kamic levels, though during life it could not function apart from the physical body, even when released from the latter in deep sleep. The same transition holds good in the case of the mental vehicle.

faulty, synonym in the Heaven of orthodox Christianity. It may here be mentioned that "Kama Loca" is rarely used as a term meaning the astral plane, except in its character as an abode of those departed from earth-life; while Devachan (rupa and arupa) is *never* rightly used to express the mental plane with its "form" and "formless" levels, except in its relation to the after-death conditions; but this will be made clearer in its proper place.

It is in the lower mental body that the consciousness functions during the long periods passed on these lower or "form" levels of Devachan, which, in the case of the more advanced portion of mankind, should vastly out-measure the time spent in Kama Loca; but when this long interval of subjective bliss comes to an end, and all the efforts and aspirations of the past earth-life have been transmuted into faculties and powers for the next, these, as we shall see, are drawn into the causal body, and the

lower mental body is, of course, left to disintegrate on its own level.

For the greater number even of fairly advanced men the period of active consciousness in the causal body—whose abiding place is *always* the “formless” level of the mental plane, spoken of as the *Arupa Devachan*, in relation to those who have passed from earthly existence—is very brief; and in the majority of cases there is but a momentary flash of consciousness before the ego again begins to sheath itself in matter of the lower planes, the process which we call reincarnation.

Before following the details of this scheme of rebirth, mention must be more fully made of the process of involution which begins at the time of death, by which the essences of the man's nature, his mental attributes, his desires and emotions, and even his physical characteristics are drawn into the causal body, to be therein garnered and carried over to the next life.

We have seen that each plane of Nature is divided into seven sub-planes, and the matter composing the highest or first sub-plane of each plane is spoken of as "atomic." At death an atom of the highest physical sub-plane—the atomic ether—is preserved by encasement in an atom of matter belonging to the atomic sub-plane of the man's astral nature, and is thus carried through the period of Kama Loca in the astral body. This twofold atom, in its turn, on the disintegration of the astral body, is similarly encased and carried over by the mental body in a particle of its matter belonging to the fourth or highest sub-plane of the rupa level of the mental plane; and when this body, too, is broken up, the next encasing vehicle of the triad of atoms is an atom of matter belonging to the true ego on the seventh or atomic sub-plane of the mental plane, for it must be remembered that the arupa level, of the mental plane is the abiding place of the causal body of the ego, the body which

was formed for the man when he had truly become an immortal ego, endowed with the Divine Spark by the third great outpouring of the One Life, and which from that point is the one vehicle which endures from life to life.

Realising that nothing in the whole Universe is immaterial, it should now be apparent that we have a perfectly intelligible and scientific basis for the transmission from life to life of every human characteristic. The physical characteristics are summarised in the etheric atom ; while the passional and emotional, the intellectual and moral parts of the man's nature are carried over respectively in the particles of Kama (the astral) and the lower Mânas.

But when the Devachanic period is ended, when the forces engendered in the last life have, for the moment, exhausted their energy on the higher plane, and have been transmuted into faculty for the life to come, and when the flash of full consciousness in the

causal body is over, the ego must perforce return to incarnation, to work out on the physical plane those special Karmic results of its past actions which can *only* find their adjustment on the plane to which they properly belong.¹ Then these indrawn atoms are again energised by the life-force of the ego now again flowing outwards; and around each atom in turn, as it reaches its own plane, is gathered such matter from each sub-plane as is naturally and fittingly attracted to it by its qualities: thus each vehicle is built of matter of such a kind as will best answer the Karmic needs of the ego, whose new expression the vehicles are to be on their respective planes—matter

¹ Thus we see there are worked out on the astral plane after death, results of the past life properly belonging to that plane. On the Devachanic plane are worked out, too, the results of the higher phases of man's nature; but it is only on return to earth that the Karmic consequences of past actions, good or evil, find their *complete* expression, and in their turn become new causes.

drawn preponderatingly from the higher or from the lower sub-planes of each level, in accordance with the past "deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil," and the man will thus return to birth either with higher and finer vestures, through which his intellectual and emotional qualities may act more freely, or with correspondingly inferior vehicles, expressed in narrower powers of heart and brain.

The law of Heredity is thus but an agent, though a very important agent, in the accomplishment of the results required; but there is one important point to be recognised. While the higher vehicles will be in exact accordance with the whole character of the individual, a physical body is needed appropriate not only to the character, but also to the *special* Karmic forces destined by necessity to work themselves out in the ensuing physical life; and thus it is that, although the dense body into which the ego is reborn will be the most suitable

vehicle attainable, it does not necessarily follow that it will be the perfect expression of *all* his previous Karma, for in no one life is the whole of the ordinary man's Karmic balance adjusted. The Law will inevitably draw him to rebirth in the family whose characteristics, spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical, *most nearly* approach the characteristics brought over from his past; but it stands to reason that, as no physical body is the exact reproduction of another, the result on this lowest plane can be only approximate.

All that we—on this lowest plane—can know of a man is the expression of his mental and emotional nature through his physical brain; thus are represented to us his feelings, judgment, and reason, his memory and will—all the faculties, in short, which the brain is capable of manifesting. The brain, it goes without saying, is a mere instrument which the Self—the real worker—uses, for the brain is only the receiver of

vibrations ; those from without being transmitted through the etheric body to the consciousness working in the astral vehicle, are thus turned into sensations, which again are changed into perceptions by the consciousness working in the lower mental body, and so back again to the physical brain ; thus we see that the power of the true thinker—the ego—to express himself is limited by the capacity of the instrument. It stands to reason, therefore, that this “instrument”—the brain—is built in each individual life in accordance with the immediate Karmic necessity of the case (“Karma,” the Law of absolute Justice, guiding to their consummation the effects generated by past causes) as well as by the Law of Heredity, the handmaid of this great Law of Karma ; and as we have before seen that in no single incarnation is the physical brain capable of expressing the highly evolved ego in its totality, so must we now recognise that no single physical incarnation can be

the complete expression of the totality of a man's Karma.

Now it is through the experiences gained in all the various vehicles of consciousness that the ego is enriched, and the results of these experiences, garnered life after life, are what constitute the growth of this ego, the true man; but these experiences are, to a large extent, moulded by the bent of the will, and should the will stoop to the attraction of lower desires, and the life be dominated to a great extent by the passional nature, the mental vehicle will become more or less entangled in this passional or Kamic vesture, and that portion which becomes hopelessly entangled therein will be torn away and left behind when the entity passes on from Kama Loca into Devachan. The astral vehicle, thus vivified by mental matter, may persist for a long time without disintegration in the realm of desire; and the sum-total of life-results that can be worked out on the Devachanic plane is decreased by

just so much of the mental vesture as has been lost. There are fewer lofty ideals to be satisfied in the bliss of Heaven, fewer efforts and aspirations of the man in his past life for spiritual and intellectual advancement, to be transmuted into new faculties and capacities for the life to come, and the ego, the true 'man,' is, by just so much, the less enriched.

Doubtless there are few of us who have not, at the end of one life, or of many lives, lost *some* portion of the lower mental vesture; but when the loss is great (and it is *possible* to lose well-nigh the whole of the lower Mânas), the result is far more serious. In such a case the wrench of separation has been spoken of as a "second death," and, but a fractional portion of the mental vehicle remaining, the Devachanic consciousness is almost entirely lost.

But even the experiences resulting from such a misspent life, followed by such a wrench of separation, must still be considered

as garnered by the ego, in the form of warnings of things to be avoided ; though, of course, as we have before seen, such a degraded past must also result in the attraction of grosser matter from all the planes, for the formation of the new vehicles for the life to come, and these poorer, grosser vehicles render it more and more difficult for the ego to express itself on the lower planes.

The reason why so few of us bring back into the present incarnation the recollection of our past lives, is intimately connected with these "vehicles of consciousness" which we have been considering. We have seen that, in the ordinary undeveloped man, his astral vesture, although a *vehicle of consciousness* through which the ego can work during his waking life, is *not a true body* in which the ego can function apart from the physical. In the highly developed man this transition will have taken place, and in this true "astral body" he may, during

deep sleep, have full consciousness on the astral plane. In some yet more highly evolved men the mental vehicle has become a true "body" capable of functioning on its own plane apart from either of the lower bodies, and in it the man may work or learn, untrammelled by the duller matter of the lower planes, and may garner rich store of knowledge and experience.

In all these true "bodies" a man may function and yet may be unable to bring back recollection through the physical brain into his waking consciousness of his experiences when apart from it during sleep. It is not till he has evolved to function consciously in the causal body that the veil is completely lifted, and the man's consciousness becomes unified on all these lower planes. This unification of consciousness generally takes place at the first great initiation. Then the man remembers in waking consciousness all his experiences in his other bodies during sleep on the various

planes of Nature, and although the whole panorama of his previous incarnations may not then be spread before him, he will, not infrequently, obtain recollection in physical consciousness of some of his past lives, and he may even be able to investigate some fragments of the past lives of those with whom he is thrown in contact. •

It is of course in accordance with the Law of Karma, which we must always remember is the Law of "Adjustment"—of absolute Justice — that the circumstances of each man's new earth-life are shaped by the great Intelligences who are the agents of this Law. He must be reborn into the race, the nation, the family in which not only his individual characteristics can be best expressed, but in which he may again be brought in contact with those persons with whom he has been in most intimate association, whether for good or evil, in the past. The ties of close friendship and of family are renewed, though not necessarily in the

identical relationships which previously existed. The past inheritance of affection and intense love, of jealousy and enmity, is duly transmitted; and as the man's heart and Will take advantage of the new opportunities offered of working out this past Karma, so will the Karma of the future be unferringly moulded. If he has injured any in the past, he may now have an opportunity of wiping out his offence by benefits conferred, or he may add to the burden of evil by fresh injury; but, as we have before said, in no single life of the average man can *all* the links of his past Karmic relationships be gathered together and worked out.

The causes which determine the sex in which an ego may be reborn are also an interesting subject for consideration. Though the ego in itself is, of course, sexless, it must necessarily, during its numberless lives on earth, take many male and female incarnations, acquiring thus the diverse characteristics and learning the distinctive

lessons which experiences in each sex may impart. It may be assumed that the lack of some special attributes, which the one or other form of experience is designed to teach, draws the ego into the needed sex-incarnation; and this is no doubt the case, but we have gathered that for ordinary humanity there are seldom less than three, and never more than seven, consecutive rebirths as man or woman. As may readily be imagined, however, these considerations do not exhaust the subject of the mystery of sex.

CHAPTER VI.

THE AFTER-DEATH CONDITIONS.

THE passage of the individual from death to birth having been outlined in the last chapter, it now remains to attempt some description of the different states of consciousness in which he passes the long interval between life and life.

It is on the astral plane and the mental plane that this long period is spent. "Kama Loca," the "realm of desire," is the special name by which the astral plane is called when it is referred to as the temporary abode of those who have passed through the gateway of death; while that guarded condition of the mental plane in

which the bliss of "heaven" is realised, is known by the name of Devachan.

The importance of life on the physical plane cannot be overrated, seeing that it is the field where experiences are acquired and *causes* generated; but the value of the long ages of bliss passed on the Devachanic plane must be equally manifest, for it is Devachan which is the world of *effects*, and there are garnered the fruits of the soul's higher aspirations which can find no field of ripening on earth's dull soil. Not that it is *only* the world of effects, for it is during its long ages of bliss that these higher aspirations of the soul, as well as its efforts and attainments during the past earth-life, are transmuted into new and finer faculties for the earth-life to come.

The state of Kama Loca, on the other hand (which has some faint resemblance to the Purgatory of the Roman Church), is but the intermediate state between the earthly and the heavenly life, and its

duration relatively to the latter should be short. In this statement about relative duration, however, it is necessary here, as always, to discriminate between the varying after-death conditions produced by the vastly different stages of development represented by different members of the human race. "Primitive man, for example, would have comparatively little consciousness on any plane but the physical during life and the lower astral after death; and, indeed, the same may be said of the quite undeveloped man even in our own day. A person a little more advanced would perhaps begin to have a short Devachanic period (on the rupa levels, of course), but would still spend by far the greater part of the time, between his incarnations, on the astral plane. As he progressed the astral life would grow shorter and the Devachanic life longer, until, when he became an intellectual and spiritually-minded person, he would pass through Kama Loka with

hardly any delay at all, and would enjoy a long and happy sojourn on the higher of the rupa levels " of Devachan.¹

Kama Loca, as we shall see, affords an immense variety of conditions. Its lowest sub-plane is described as densely dark and revolting—a veritable purgatory to the pure-minded. The chief inhabitants of this region are those who on earth led low and evil lives, whose wants have never risen above the material plane, and whose lower desires were so stimulated during life that their persistence lasts after death, in yearnings for the animal delights they can no longer taste.

Here also dwell the suicides, and those whose lives have been prematurely cut short. But in these cases the spiritual conditions of the ego suddenly snatched from earth-life, would materially modify the character of his sojourn in this lowest realm of Kama Loca. It seems to be a

¹ C. W. Leadbeater's *The Devachanic Plane*, p. 34.

law of Nature that the man whose life has been cut short by accident or sudden and premature death, shall remain on this lowest sub-plane till the expiration of what would have been the natural duration of the life on earth; but in cases where the character has been so good and pure as to have no attraction to this lowest sphere of "desire," Nature casts over the soul a veil of unconsciousness till the period of waiting is ended, and it may pass on to happier conditions.

The conditions of existence on the three sub-planes which lie just above this lowest and most material region, are said to resemble very closely life on this earth, except that such life is led in the astral instead of the physical body. It is, indeed, no uncommon occurrence for one waking up in this state, after having passed through the gateway of death, to fail entirely to realise that he is not still alive in the physical body.

So plastic, too, is the matter of this plane

that the action of thought upon it produces to a certain extent the object desired in the mind of the thinker. As we shall see later on, it is the still more plastic matter of the mental plane which provides the conditions required for the subjective bliss of Devachan. The blissful condition of that state is perfect and complete, but we must recognise that a necessary condition of its very perfection is the shutting out of those jarring and discordant vibrations from the outer world which produce pain and suffering. And therefore—since the element of pain is necessarily excluded from the Devachanic condition—it follows that this condition must be, in a certain sense, one of illusion, even as contrasted with our life here on earth. In this respect the after-death conditions in Kama Loca are somewhat different, but so plastic is the matter of this plane also that thought may result in the objective appearance of any greatly desired object.

On its three highest sub-planes life be-

comes more detached from earthly interests and more spiritual in quality. Of course it is not until the passions and lower desires of the man's nature are exhausted, and there remain only the loftier aspirations, such as even the highest realm of Kama Loca fails to satisfy, that the astral body is left behind to disintegrate slowly in its own sphere, and the soul passes on into Devachan.

We have seen in the last chapter that, even when the individual has reached this state of bliss, he may have left behind him a portion of his mental body, entangled and retained by the Kamic vehicle. In this case, 'instead of this Kamic vehicle being left as a "shell" in the astral world, it is endowed by this remnant of Mânas with such persistence that it may last on for years, in exceptional cases even for centuries. Such a shade, it must be borne in mind, is in no way animated by the consciousness of the man who has quitted it. The astral elemental life, whose very essence is desire,

continues to keep up the special vibrations imparted to it during the man's life, for a longer or a shorter period as the case may be ; the fragment of the lower mental sheath entangled within it, likewise, for a time continues to vibrate at the rates to which it has been set, and thus it sometimes happens that such a "shade" seems to reflect the tastes and habits, and of course the appearance, which its former tenant had in life. In time the mental matter which supplied the factitious consciousness will disintegrate. The "shade" will then become the "shell," which will in due time be resolved into its astral elements.

It is of course on the four lower sub-planes of Devachan—known as the rupa levels—that the great majority of humanity pass the long period of subjective bliss before their return to earth-life.

The soul itself is the fashioner of its own Devachan. After the death of the body, and when the heart has already ceased to

beat, consciousness is still seated in the brain, for the soul has not yet left the body. During these brief moments the events of the life just ended, from earliest infancy to the hour of death, are marshalled in their minutest details before the mind, and the thoughts, the words, and the acts of the whole life-time are realised in a flash. It is at this supreme moment that the feeling then dominant is said to strike the keynote of the man's next phase of existence.

Heaven will, of course, take a different form for every different soul, each one being the creator of his own heaven. Thought, acting on the yet finer and more plastic matter of the mental plane, immediately produces the objective appearance of that which is thought of. Thus the desires of each one who enters this guarded region are responded to and satisfied the moment they are imaged in the mind. Heaven will thus be filled with the scenery, crowded with the incidents, and thronged with the friends which each

one will desire to find. No pain, no grief, not even the shadow of a sorrow will come to darken the bright horizon of unalloyed happiness.

The dear friend who had been left on earth has only to be thought of and that friend is near. Scenery transcending in beauty anything this earth can show will leap to the eyes of the lover of Nature. Strains of the most exquisite music will ravish the musician's ear. Problems which filled the mind of the philosopher and thinker will now unfold themselves to complete and successful solution; and more ecstatic rapture will be added to the worship which the religious devotee offers to the God of his adoration. Such will form the fabric of the heavenly visions—visions more real than our earth-life seems to us, and renewed with an intensity to which we have here no parallel.

Nor must the bliss be thought of as monotonous. There is continual change of

occupation in Devachan. For that life is but the fruition, the harvest-time, of those seed-germs of the soul, dropped from the tree of physical existence in our moments of dream and hope—glimpses of bliss and happiness, stifled in an ungrateful soil, blooming in the rosy dawn of Devachan, and ripening under its ever-fructifying sky. If man had but one single moment of ideal experience, not even then could it be the indefinite prolongation of that single moment. That one note, struck from the lyre of life, would form the key-note of the being's subjective state, and work out into numberless harmonic tones and semitones of that perfect harmony in which the soul finds its complete satisfaction. There all unrealised hopes, aspirations, dreams, become fully realised, and the dreams of the objective become the realities of the subjective existence.¹

¹ See A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, Sixth Ed., pp. 90, 91.

The duration of the Devachanic period is, of course, in accordance with the impulses set up during the previous life. These impulses, in the case of the most spiritually minded, may take 1500 or 2000 years to work themselves out, though even in such cases other considerations may materially modify the length of the period. But these impulses must ultimately exhaust themselves, the desire for fresh experience will re-assert itself, and the ego will be drawn back to incarnation.

It must be understood that the individual, who, during earth-life, functions through his mental, astral, and physical bodies, has during the long portion of the Devachanic period passed on its "Rupa" or "Form" levels, been functioning in his lower mental body; but when the moment comes to pass on to the "Arupa" (Formless) levels of Devachan, this lower mental vehicle also is left behind, to disintegrate quickly on its own plane, while the permanent particle of the lower

Mânas, which has been already referred to as enfolding the astral and etheric atoms—the synthesis of the man's past personality—is drawn into the causal body on the higher mental plane.

Among the great masses of humanity there is, of course, but a minority who are sufficiently developed in the direction of higher intellect and spirituality to enable them to function consciously in the causal body; therefore, for the bulk of mankind, the long Devachanic rest is on the lower levels of that plane, the higher being but touched before the return to incarnation takes place. On these higher levels, as we have seen, the atoms containing the essence of the past life are drawn into the causal body, and at the moment before rebirth occurs that flash of consciousness of other past lives which has been already spoken of. For the minority, able to function on the higher Devachanic plane, there will be, of course, a longer or shorter period of still

higher bliss and greater development of faculty on its levels, before they too, having worked out all effects of the past life, return again to the world of causes.

This, then, is the manner in which Nature makes the balance equal; and truly, in this age of darkness, it would seem that these centuries of peace and bliss—like the night's rest after the day's work—are sorely needed by the suffering and toiling millions to refresh the soul before its return to the wearying and heart-rending struggles of earth-life. But the enlightened man will not desire to waste his time in what is chiefly—though not entirely—personal enjoyment; the true aspirant will renounce the bliss, in order the sooner to reach the goal. For when man reaches a certain stage of evolution, it is possible for him to choose his course, and with the help of his Master to be drawn at death into the current of almost immediate rebirth. Such an one will spend the short months or years of the

interval in work on one of the higher levels of Kama Loca; and when the moment of reincarnation arrives, he is—by his Master's power—enabled to pass rapidly through the stages of the mental plane, so that the permanent atoms are drawn into the ego without passing through the normal processes of Nature. And as no force can ever be wasted, the causes, whose effects would otherwise have worked themselves out in ages of bliss, are turned to other and nobler uses both for the man himself and his fellow-men.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GOAL OF HUMANITY.

WE have seen that the standard placed before humanity in the Lunar Manwantara was the attainment of individuality—of complete self-consciousness. Now the standard placed before us in the present Manwantara is a further expansion of consciousness, combined with, and alone made possible by, the purification and ennoblement of character.

It is not easy to picture human character which has left behind it all the sins and frailties which we are accustomed to regard as a necessary part of human nature. The thoughts, the feelings, the motives of those

who stand at a lower stage of development than we do, may lie within the limits of our comprehension. But who can gauge all that lies in the heart and mind of a hero, a prophet, or a saint? Truly, only those who have reached the same level. The higher can comprehend the lower, but the lower can never comprehend the higher. Even the dimly perceiving multitudes may recognise from the actions, the teachings, or the life, that a being greater and nobler than common humanity is treading the earth along with them, and the worship rendered will help to lift them towards the object of their reverence; but the deepest feelings and the highest thoughts of such an one must ever remain a sealed book to all below his level.

How much more must this be so in the case of the best and greatest of mankind, Gautama the Buddha and Jesus the Christ?

- But it is the standard which they reached that is placed before us to-day—placed before us as the object of our aspiration—not

that the lofty heights on which they stand represent the outcome of mere normal evolution. In them are manifest the perfected ideals of Power, Wisdom, and Love. But though the goal of normal evolution, which will be reached through the long ages, will be great and glorious beyond our wildest dreams of imagination, it must nevertheless be distinguished from the still loftier heights to which the pathway of initiation leads. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way" by which common humanity travels, generation by generation, and millennium by millennium, but "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth [the Initiate] unto life."¹

¹ The "destruction" to which the "broad way" leads is really the everlasting recurrence of death and birth. This is what was meant by the *early* Christians who wrote the Gospels. It was left for the barbarians of the Middle Ages to alter the true interpretation, and to replace it with the pernicious and revolting dogma of "eternal damnation." Annie Besant's *Esoteric Christianity*, pp. 48-50.

That the great masses of 'mankind, so far from being ready to enter on the "narrow way," must needs fall short even of the goal of normal evolution, is a fact we may infer from the parallel of the Lunar Pitris. These great masses of mankind need further experience. The same heights will be open for their attainment, at every stage of their progress through the untold future, and many will tread the Path before the Manwantara is ended. But what may take them long ages and myriads of lives, may now be attained by the resolute and strong-hearted in a comparatively short time. It is indeed a glorious task thus to anticipate to so startling a degree the normal course of evolution, but surely none who have caught a glimpse of the Path leading to the divine goal but must feel that all earthly action is waste of energy which has not for object the attainment of its portals.

Before speaking of the Pathway of initiation and its object, some general indication

must be given of what constitutes the goal of normal evolution.

The ascending degrees of consciousness have been already traced through the varying grades of matter on the physical, the astral, the mental, and the Buddhic planes. But there are still higher planes of consciousness within the limits of our Solar system ; the highest with which our scheme of evolution is concerned in this Manwantara being known by the name of Nirvana. This is the plane of Atma or Spirit, and it is the ability to function consciously on this most exalted level which constitutes the goal of normal evolution in this Manwantara.

But even Nirvana is not eternal. The stupendous ages which will be spent in this transcendent state are utterly beyond our imagination. Nevertheless, they will come to an end, and those who entered Nirvana, will, at some period in the infinite future, have to return, in order to begin again some

cycle of conditioned existence from the point at which they left it.

This lesser goal is necessarily included in the greater, viz., the stupendous heights to which the pathway of initiation leads. Let us therefore attempt to investigate the possibilities of this pathway of initiation, and endeavour to realise what the expansion of consciousness above referred to means, and in what consists the ennoblement of character which alone permits a man to pass through the narrow portals of the "Strait Gate."

An analysis of this purification and ennoblement of character is no easy task, seeing that the candidate for initiation only begins where the ordinary "good man" leaves off. "Remember, O disciple! that great though the gulf may be between the good man and the sinner, it is greater between the good man and the man who has attained knowledge; it is immeasurable between the good man and the one who is

on the threshold of divinity.”¹ But this, and nothing less than this, is the object of our quest.

As it is written, “Be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. . . . Beware lest thou should set a foot still soiled upon the ladder’s lowest rung. Woe unto him who dares pollute one rung with filthy feet.”² In other words, the pupil must be strenuously striving to cast off the grosser sins and failings of humanity, and must have partially succeeded “in doing so, before presuming to offer himself as one desirous of treading the Pathway of initiation.

It goes without saying that, before the final goal is reached, not only will all vices have to be entirely eliminated from the man’s nature, but the attainment of all virtues must be fully achieved, and their essence made an integral part of the

¹ *Light on the Path*, pp. 13, 14.

² *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 15

character. Fearlessness must go hand in hand with humility, power with wisdom, fortitude with gentleness, and fiery energy with steadfast patience.

The control of his thoughts is a task which the aspirant will early have to undertake. The mind of the ordinary man in its normal condition is a mere playground for the thoughts that hover round and intrude on his attention ; but the aspirant has to learn to control these tumultuous mental vibrations ; the soul must be master in its own dwelling. This is a hard thing to do, even when life is running smoothly along, but how much harder when the pupil is being tested by some overwhelming sorrow—or joy ? When the greatness of the goal has been recognised, some sense of the proportion of things must have been gained. Equanimity under *all* possible circumstances of existence is the result of ages of effort ; but the transitory nature of life's joys and sorrows will have been at least partially

realised, and each fresh emotion, however insistent it may be, will not be allowed to take exclusive possession of the mind. Troubles may come, but they will no longer be able to shatter the aspirant's equanimity; and although it is true that one who has entered on the Path is bound to feel pain and pleasure, not less but more keenly than ordinary men, his wider survey gives him a power and a peace which they do not possess. Becoming more and more detached from the things of earth, and centring his interest more and more in the eternal, the storms of life will have less power to shake his serenity. This aloofness from earthly interests, while yet all earthly duties are being discharged to the full, has been partially expressed by Keble. His lines may help to make the idea clearer.

There are, in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime :

Who carry music in their heart
 Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
 Plying their daily task with busier feet
 Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

“From right thought most naturally follow right speech and right action—speech which must invariably be true, and gentle, and courteous; action which shall always be noble and beneficent, expressing to the world the growth of the character in strength, wisdom, and compassion.

So great are the forces and powers conferred on the candidate at initiation, that he cannot be entrusted with them till he has gained such unshakable strength and self-control that it is absolutely impossible for him to give way to any of the lower emotions, such as anger and resentment; for if these lower emotions were yielded to by one possessing those powers, they might easily become weapons of destruction against his fellow-men. Therefore, long before the last stage is reached, all possibility of hate

or anger, whether on his own account or on that of others, must be absolutely obliterated from the heart.

So far the moral and religious virtues have been chiefly dwelt on, but the most exalted heights of intellect will have to be achieved, as well as those special qualities developed which have characterised all great leaders of men. For he who attains the heights of adeptship must be fit to be a World-Ruler and a World-Teacher, as well as a World-Saviour. The dominant characteristics of energy and power—achieved through iron self-control—which have so far been merely foreshadowed in the greatest leaders of men the world has seen, will have to be fully attained, while the greatest heights of intellect and knowledge of which we have as yet had experience will have to be reached, *and surpassed*, by one destined to attain the goal.

The vastness of the field covered in this transformation of character is one of the

most important points to bear in mind. The words of one who has trod the path—carefully guarded words though they must necessarily be—may help us to understand better what is needful for the man who would attain.

“Seek the way by retreating within.

“Seek the way by advancing boldly without.

“Seek it not by any one road. To each temperament there is one road which seems the most desirable. But the way is not found by devotion alone, by religious contemplation alone, by ardent progress, by self-sacrificing labour, by studious observation of life. None alone can take the disciple more than one step onwards. All steps are necessary to make up the ladder. The vices of men become steps in the ladder one by one as they are surmounted. The virtues of man are steps, indeed, necessary—not by any means to be dispensed with. Yet, though they create

a fair atmosphere and a happy future, they are useless if they stand alone. The whole nature of man must be used wisely by the one who desires to enter the way. Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life. But he is only so when he grasps his whole individuality firmly, and, by the force of his awakened spiritual will, recognises this individuality as not himself, but that thing which he has with pain created for his own use, and by means of which he purposes, as his growth slowly develops his intelligence, to reach to the life beyond individuality. When he knows that for this his wonderful complex, separated life exists, then, and then only, he is upon the way. Seek it by plunging into the mysterious and glorious depths of your own inmost being. Seek it by testing all experience, by utilising the senses, in order to understand the growth and meaning of individuality, and the beauty and obscurity of those other divine fragments which are struggling

side by side with you, and 'form the race to which you belong. Seek it by study of the laws of being, the laws of nature, the laws of the supernatural; and seek it by making the profound obeisance of the soul to the dim star that burns within. Steadily, as you watch and worship, its light will grow stronger. Then you may know you have found the beginning of the way. And, when you have found the end, its light will suddenly become the infinite light."¹

But one qualification of the aspirant must be dwelt on a little more fully, for it is the final crown of all. It will have been observed that the quality of love and compassion has been the key-note throughout, and the degree to which this quality is identified with the character will mark the standard of relative attainment. The perfect development of love for all humanity, through endless effort and repeated sacrifice, is the highest point to which man can reach.

¹ *Light on the Path*, pp. 11-13.

Now this love is no mere sentimental goodwill, no mere vague and undefined affection for humanity in general. It is a personal love for each, a perfect recognition of the claims of man as man on all we have and all we are ; a passionate giving out of our best in practical response to each personal claim, just as though the one person whose claim may come before us, at any given moment, were our nearest and our dearest, our closest and our best. It means, in fact, the widening of personal or individual love, till it embraces *all*, so that to one who needs us is freely given all that before was given but to the one or to the few.

Such a love fitly crowns the edifice of wisdom and power. It is the culminating achievement, the final and crowning result of the effort of ages.

This, then, is some faint representation of what is meant by the perfecting of the character in power, wisdom, and love ; but

any description of the expansion of consciousness must manifestly be a still harder task.

The general lines along which this development must proceed have indeed been already indicated in the previous pages. The process consists in the gradual organising of the bodies in which the individual may slowly learn to function in full consciousness on higher and higher planes of being, and in the gradual unification of the consciousness on all these planes.

The ordinary man in his normal development, as we have seen above, gradually acquires the power of functioning during sleep, in his astral body. If, through earnest effort, his development proceeds steadily in intellect and spirituality, he will attract the notice of some Great One who may become his Master. When desire for progress on the pupil's part is combined with earnestness and capacity to learn, and

presuming always that his life in the physical body is free from vice, this Great One may help him in his efforts. As it is written, "Know, O disciple, that those who have passed through the silence, and felt its peace, and retained its strength, they long that you shall pass through it also. Therefore, in the Hall of Learning, when he is capable of entering there, the disciple will always find his Master. . . . For when the disciple is ready the Master is ready also."¹ A friend of the writer's once told him that on enquiring of one of these Great Ones, who was his Master, how it was that the fitness and readiness of any individual man among all the millions could be recognised, the reply was that it was like the sudden lighting up in the gloaming of a window in some distant valley, to one who was watching on a far-off hill-top.

One of the first lessons which the disciple will be taught will be to anticipate the

¹ *Light on the Path*, pp. 16-20.

normal course of evolution, and to fashion for himself the Mayavi Rupa or lower mental body. He should then be able to function not only on the astral, but on the lower mental plane; but ere this power is entrusted to him his fitness will be tested in various ways, and after it has been entrusted to him, he has to gain the confidence, born of repeated experiences, before he is able to work freely on the mental plane as one of the "invisible Helpers" of his brother men.

One of his earliest tasks on the astral plane, when his physical body is in deep sleep, will be that of bringing comfort and help to those who have just passed through the gateway of death, many of whom, especially those whose earthly lives have been prematurely cut short, and those whom priests may have terrified with the fears of Hell, stand in very great need of such help and comfort. "To preach to the spirits in prison" are the words used by St Peter to

describe this special duty and privilege. But it will be through all the changing circumstances of his daily life in the world, through his attitude of mind, his words, and his actions, whether in the most common or the most trying circumstances, brought about by his own past Karma, that the strength and courage of the candidate will chiefly be tested, for to the man who "is faithful in that which is least" will alone be committed "the true riches."

If, through the long probation, he steadfastly strives to free himself from the sins and failings to which he is most prone, and to replace them with the qualities of which he most stands in need, this strengthening and purification of his character will be recognised and rewarded by his definite acceptance as a pupil by the Master who now takes upon himself the responsibility of his further training. This definite acceptance of the pupil by the Master is sometimes spoken of as a minor initiation, sometimes

as the first "Step" on the Path. As the pupil progresses in strength, purity, and self-control, other similar "Steps" follow to mark the standard he has reached.

Before passing the first real Initiation, however, the aspirant will have, as we have seen, not only to control the evil of his nature, but to acquire the positive virtues, to so conquer *himself* that he is fit to rule the "powers of the air," the powers, that is, of the higher planes; so that long years of probation may still have to be faced.

But when the aspirant has proved himself worthy, the Master, who during all these years has guided and watched over his progress, now leads him to his first Great Initiation. This is the acknowledgment of his long struggle, the seal of his acceptance as a pledged pupil, and he is now entrusted with knowledge and power surpassing that of ordinary men.

The Buddhic vehicle, too, will now have been so evolved, that, when, this great

moment comes, it is fit to become the glorified body of the initiate. Clothed in this "glorified Bliss Body," the candidate will now, by his Master's aid, enter into the lofty state of consciousness of the Buddhic plane, where the consciousness is united with the "life" instead of with the "form." It will be but a touch of this exalted consciousness that he may yet experience, but even that touch will open a new world before him, and will for ever change the current of his thoughts and feelings; for, in the marvellous extension of consciousness on that plane, he will, for the first time, fully *realise* what he has only *learned* before, the unity of all that lives and breathes with himself, and the unity of the all in the One, the "Fullness of God."

This first Great Initiation is for the candidate truly an occasion momentous with results the most far reaching. Never again can he wander in mazes of doubt, never again be stretched on the common

rack of the world's desires. He may "waver, hesitate, and turn aside," he may fall into error and commit sin, but in no future birth will he return wholly blinded by illusion, like the rest of men; in no future life will he have to grope his way through the darkness; now he sees and knows, and nothing can ever permanently hide the light which shines before his eyes, nothing can quite extinguish the light within his soul.

This is the attainment of "knowledge" above referred to, but the distance which was described as still separating us from the final goal will also be remembered.

We are told that in the old Egyptian days this initiation took place in the physical body, but such is now rarely the case. It is in the lower mental body or mayavi rupa that the aspirant presents himself to receive this seal of recognition of his efforts. With this first initiation also the candidate obtains the ability to function at will in the causal

body in full consciousness ; and consequently, in most cases, to bring back recollection to the physical brain of his experiences during the hours of sleep, by the unification of the consciousness on all four planes. He may also, even in the waking state, have the power to see and to hear the sights and sounds of the astral and both sub-divisions of the mental plane, with all that this implies of clairvoyant vision ; but whether these powers are fully gained or not, it is manifestly a vast expansion of consciousness to be able to function consciously on the astral and the mental planes, and to have had the still higher touch of consciousness on the Buddhic level.

When the initiate can at will and with full consciousness function in the Buddhic body on that transcendent level, he will manifestly have reached still more exalted heights of consciousness, and by this time, he will certainly have passed more than one initiation. Even in his normal waking

consciousness, nothing now in the whole world towards which he chooses to direct his observation can remain hidden from his view, whether it be the most secret thoughts of those around him, or the records of events, in their minutest details, whenever and wherever they may have happened. The hidden secrets of Nature, too, lie open to his gaze. The whole aspect of the world will indeed be changed for him, carrying, as he does, unbroken consciousness from life to life on five planes of being; for though the misery and sorrow of the world are still before his eyes, he knows that they are not eternal, and "that with the ceasing of ignorance will come the end of pain."

The knowledge of his past lives will now more or less form part of his waking consciousness, and this, with the recollection of his work when out of the body, whether it be gleaned wisdom from the words of his exalted Teacher, or imparting to others such wisdom as he has learned, will so link together

for him all planes of existence, that life will be illuminated and transfigured.

A still further expansion of consciousness will be reached when the high initiate, having gained still loftier levels, can at will consciously function on the Nirvanic plane. This is a state of consciousness which practically amounts to omniscience as regards our whole Solar system, and the vehicle now used is the third and highest of man's spiritual bodies, the Atmic vesture. It is the "fine film of subtle matter that separates off the individual Spirit as a Being, and yet permits the interpenetration of all by all, and is thus the expression of the fundamental unity."¹

Human imagination cannot well picture a loftier state of being, nevertheless there is a still further height to gain.

All through his upward course has the aspirant after perfection continued to gain power and wisdom in ever-increasing degree.

¹ A. Besant's *Esoteric Christianity*, p. 241.

At every stage of initiation fresh keys of power and wisdom have been placed in his hands; but "Love is the fulfilling of the Law," and he who wins to such love as that described in the previous pages will have raised himself to the plane of the Divine Love, and its selfless flame will have burned out the last links of his Karmic bonds. Henceforth he is freed from the burden of the flesh, from what we know as "conditioned existence." Whatever heights of power and wisdom remain for him to gain, will be reached by him in the life he is then living; and when the end of that life comes, he passes into union with the Logos of our system—enters into the "Joy of his Lord." Merged in the Divine Existence, he is yet imperishably *individual*, for as his characteristics were carried over from life to life in the atoms of the several planes to which his nature belonged, so does the man himself—the divine Spark of Atma, which has been his individuality throughout the ages, draw

into his being the Buddhic atom which has similarly enfolded the atom of the higher Mānas, and he himself is now withdrawn into the life of the Logos. •

Though the lower atoms—the personal nature and its expression—are left behind, yet all the distinctive qualities gained, all the results achieved, all the memories of his long series of earth-lives, remain the possession of the individual, while the consciousness of this risen “Son of God” is now only limited by the consciousness of the Logos Himself.

This is the ultimate and supreme result attainable within the limits of our Solar system. As we saw in the first chapter, our Solar Logos in His “Great Sacrifice” put Himself forth in the worlds which He brought into being, in order that in the fulness of time many individualities should be drawn back to consciously share with Him that bliss which is His very nature and essence.

Merged in the Divine Existence truly the Son has become one with the Father. There only now remains the possibility of again coming forth at some period of the illimitable future, to voluntarily undertake, as one of the Divine Hierarchy, the glorious work of creation or of redemption.

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